



Melancholy Consequences

OF TWO

Sea Storms,

Being, an Account of the

SHIPWRECK

of the PORTUGUESE SNOW, on her passage from
GOA to MADRAS, in the year 1782 on board
of which was DONALD CAMPBELL Esq; of
Barbeck,

(as related in his journey to India.)

AND A

NARRATIVE OF THE LOSS

OF THE

ALSEWELL East-Indiaman,

Capt. RICHARD PIERCE;

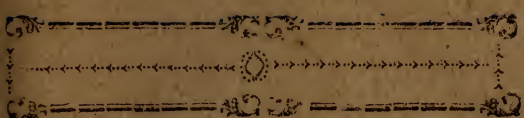
fortunately Wrecked at the Isle of PURBECK,
coast of DORSETSHIRE January 6th 1786;
compiled from the communications of the two
chief Officers who escaped the dreadful Cata-
strophe.

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MELANCHOLY CONSEQUENCES

OF TWO

SEA STORMS, &c.

*account of the Shipwreck of a Portuguese Snow, on
her passage from Goa to Madras—in the year 1782,
related by one of the Sufferers.*

IT was now the eighteenth of May when we
sailed from Goa. The hemisphere had been
some days overcast with clouds: some light
showers of rain had fallen; and it certainly did not
tend to raise my spirits, and free me from my omi-
nous apprehensions, to hear that those circumstances
indicated an approaching gale of wind. I observed,
however, that the vessel was much too deep in the
water, being greatly overloaded—that she was in
every respect defective, and, as the seamen say, ill-
built, and in short very unfit to encounter a gale
wind of any violence. I scorned, however, to

yield to those united impressions, and determine to proceed.

“On the nineteenth, the sky was obscured by immense fleeces of clouds, surcharged with inflammable matter; and in the evening, the rain fell in torrents, the firmament darkened apace, such night came on, and the horrors of extreme darkness were rendered still more horrible by the peals of thunder which rent the air, and the frequent flashes of lightning, which served only to shew the horror of our situation, and leave us in increased darkness: mean time the wind became more violent blowing on the shore; and a heavy sea, raised by its force, united with it to make our state more formidable.

“By day light on the morning of the twentieth the gale had increased to a furious tempest; and the sea, keeping pace with it, ran mountain high; as it kept invariably to the same point, the captain and officers became seriously alarmed, and all were persuaded that the south-west monsoon had set in, which, if it were so, would render it absolutely impossible for us to weather the coast. All day, however, we kept as close as the violence of the weather would allow us to the wind; but the sea caused her head to lurch to leeward, that she ran more lee than head-way; and the rigging was strained with the work, that we had little hope of keeping off the shore, unless the wind changed, which there was not now the smallest probability of. During the night there was no intermission of storm: many of the sails blew into ribbonds; much of the rigging was carried away, and such repairs were made, that, before morning, every thing that could possibly be struck was down upon deck.

“About seven o'clock on the morning of

twenty-first, I was alarmed by an unusual noise on the deck, and running up, perceived that every remaining sail in the vessel, the fore sail one excepted, was totally carried away. The sight was horrible, and the whole vessel presented a spectacle as dreadful to the feelings as mortifying to human pride. Fear had produced, not only all the infirmities of despondency, but all the mischievous effects of insanity. In one place stood the captain, living, stamping, and tearing his hair in handfuls from his head—here, some of the crew were cast upon their knees, clasping their hands, and praying, with all the extravagance of horror painted in their faces—there, others were flogging their imaginations with all their might, calling upon them to allay the storm. One of our passengers, who was purser of an English East Indiaman, had got hold of a cask-bottle of rum, and with an air of distraction and deep despair imprinted in his face, was stalking about in his shirt. I perceived him to be on the point of serving it about, in large tumblers, to the few undismayed people; and well convinced, that, so far from alleviating, it would sharpen the horrors of their mind, I went forward, and with much difficulty prevented him.

“ Having accomplished this point, I applied myself to the captain, and endeavoured to bring him back (if possible) to his recollection, and to a sense of what he owed to his duty as a commander, and to his dignity as a man: I exhorted him to encourage the sailors by his example; and strove to raise his spirits, by saying that the storm did not appear to me by any means so terrible as some I had before experienced.

“ While I was thus employed, we shipped a sea on the starboard side, which I really thought would have sent us down. The vessel seemed to sink be-

neath its weight, shivered, and remained motionless—it was a moment of critical suspense; fancy made me think I felt her gradually descending—I gave myself up as gone, and summoned all my fortitude to bear approaching death with becoming manhood.

“Just at this crisis, the water, which rushed with incredible force through all parts of the vessel, brought out floating, and nearly suffocated, another English passenger, who was endeavouring to take a little repose in a small cabin boarded off from the deck: he was a very stout young man, and full of true spirit. Finding that the vessel was not, as he had thought, going immediately down, he joined me in exhorting the captain to his duty: we persuaded him to throw the guns overboard, as well as a number of trunks and packages with which the vessel was much encumbered; and with some little exertion, we got the pumps set a going.”

The name of the English passenger just mentioned was Hall. He was a young man of a most amiable disposition, and with it possessed all that manly spirit that gives presence of mind in exigencies of danger. He and Capt. Campbell having, with great difficulty, got some hands to stick to the pumps, stood at the wheel, at once to assist the men, and prevent them from quitting it: and although hopeless, determined that no effort practicable on their parts should be wanting to the preservation of the vessel. The water, however, gained upon the pumps, notwithstanding every effort, and it evidently appeared that they could not keep her long above water.

At ten o'clock the wind seemed to increase, and amounted to a downright hurricane: the sky was so entirely obscured with black clouds, and the rain fell so thick, that objects were not discernable.

om the wheel to the ship's head. Soon the pumps
 ere choaked, and could no longer be worked:
 en dismay seized on all—nothing but unutterable
 spair, silent anguish, and horror, wrought up to
 enzy, was to be seen; not a single soul was capa-
 e of an effort to be useful—all seemed more de-
 ous to extinguish their calamities by embracing
 ath, than willing, by a painful exertion, to
 oid it.

At about eleven o'clock they could plainly dis-
 ighish a dreadful roaring noise, resembling that
 waves rolling against rocks; but the darkness of
 e day, and the accompanying rains, prevented
 em from seeing any distance; and if it were a
 ck, they might be actually dashed to pieces on it
 fore they could perceive it. At twelve o'clock,
 iver, the weather cleared up a little, and both
 e wind and the sea seemed to have abated: the
 ry expansion of the prospect round the ship was
 ilarating; and as the weather grew better, and
 e sea less furious, the senses of the people return-
 , and the general stupefaction began to de-
 ease.

The weather continuing to clear up, they in some
 ne discovered breakers and large rocks without
 le of them: so that it appeared they must have
 lled quite close to them, and were now fairly
 mmed in between them and the land.

"In this very critical juncture," says our travel-
 , "the captain, entirely contrary to my opin-
 , adopted the dangerous resolution of letting go
 anchor, to bring her up with her head to the
 : but, though no seaman, my common sense
 d me that she could never ride it out, but must
 rectly go down. The event nearly justified my
 dgment; for she had scarcely been at anchor be-
 re an enormous sea rolling over her, overwhelm-

ed and filled her with water, and every one on board concluded that she was certainly sinking. On an instant, a Lascar, with a presence of mind worthy an old English mariner, took an axe, ran forward and cut the cable."

On finding herself free, the vessel again floated and made an effort to right herself; but she was most completely water-logged, and heeled to leeward so much, that the gunnel lay under water. They then endeavoured to steer as fast as they could for the land, which they knew could not be at a great distance, though they were unable to discover it through the hazy weather: the fore-sail was loosened; by great efforts in bailing, she righted a little, her gunnel was got above water; and she scudded as well as they could before the wind which still blew hard on shore; and about two o'clock the land appeared at a small distance ahead.

The love of life countervails all other considerations in the mind of man. The uncertainty they were under with regard to the shore before them, which they had reason to believe was part of Hydrundin's dominions, where they should meet with the most rigorous treatment, if not ultimate death, was forgotten in the joyful hope of saving life, and they scudded towards the shore in all the exulting transports of a people just snatched from the jaws of death.

This gleam of happiness, however, continued not long: a tremendous sea rolling after them broke over their stern, tore every thing before it stove in the steerage, carried away the rudder, shattered the wheel to pieces, and tore up the wearing-bolts of the deck—conveyed the men who stood at the wheel forward, and swept them overboard. Captain Campbell was standing, at the time, near

he wheel, and fortunately had hold of the taffarel, which enabled him to resist in part the weight of the wave. he was, however, swept off his feet, and dashed against the main-mast. The jerk from the taffarel, which he held very tenaciously, seemed as if it would have dislocated his arms: it broke, however the impetus of his motion, and in all probability saved him from being dashed to pieces against the mast.

"I floundered about," says he, "in the water at the foot of the mast, till at length I got on my feet, and seized a rope, which I held in a state of great embarrassment, dubious what I should do to extricate myself. At this instant I perceived that Mr. Hall had got upon the capstern, and was waving his hand to me to follow his example: this I wished to do, though it was an enterprize of some risk and difficulty; for, if I lost the hold I had, a single motion of the vessel, or a full wave, would certainly carry me overboard. I made a bold push, however, and fortunately accomplished it. Having attained this station, I could the better survey the wreck, and saw that the water was nearly breast-high on the quarter deck (for the vessel was deep-listed); and I perceived the unfortunate English officer standing where the water was most shallow, as if watching with patient expectation its rising, and awaiting death: I called to him to come to us, but he shook his head in despair, and said, in a lamentable tone, "It is all over with us! God have mercy upon us!"—then seated himself with seeming composure on a chair which happened to be rolling about in the wreck of the deck, and in a few minutes afterwards was washed into the sea along with it, where he was speedily released from a state ten thousand times worse than death.

"During this universal wreck of things, the hor-

ror I was in could not prevent me from observing a very curious circumstance, which at any other time would have excited laughter, though now it produced no other emotion than surprise. We happened to be in part laden with mangoes, of which the island of Goa is known to produce the finest in the world, some of them lay in baskets on the poop: a little black boy, in the moment of greatest danger, had got seated by them, devouring them voraciously, and crying all the time most bitterly at the horrors of his situation!

"The vessel now got completely water-logged; and Mr. Hall and I were employed in forming conjectural calculations how many minutes she could keep above water, and consoling one another on the unfortunate circumstances under which we met—lamenting that fate had thus brought us acquainted only to make us witnesses of each other's misery, and then to see one another no more.

"As the larboard side of the vessel was gradually going down, the deck, and of course the capstern, became too nearly perpendicular for us to continue on it: we therefore forsook the necessity of quitting it, and got upon the starboard side, holding fast by the gunnel, and allowing our bodies and legs to yield to the sea as it broke over us. Thus we continued for some time: at length the severity of the labour so entirely exhausted our strength and spirits that our best hope seemed to be a speedy conclusion to our painful death; and we began to have serious intentions of letting go our hold, and yielding ourselves up at once to the fury of the waves.

"The vessel, which all this time drifted with the sea and wind, gradually approximated the shore and at length struck the ground, which for an instant revived our almost departed hopes; but we soon found that it did not in the smallest degree

better our situation. Again I began to yield to utter despair—again I thought of letting go my hold, and sinking at once: it is impossible, thought I, even to escape—why, then, prolong, for a few minutes, a painful existence that must at last be given up? Yet, yet, the all-subduing love of life suggested, that many things apparently impossible had come to pass; and I said to myself, If life is to be lost, why not lose it in a glorious struggle? Should I survive it by accident, life will be rendered doubly sweet to me, and I still more worthy of it by persevering fortitude.

“ While I was employed in this train of reflection, I perceived some of the people collecting together, talking, and holding a consultation: it immediately occurred to me, that they were devising some plan for escaping from the wreck, and getting on shore: and, so natural is it for man to cling to his fellow creature for support in difficult or dangerous exigences, that I proposed to Mr. Hall to join them, and take a share in the execution of the plan—observing to him at the same time, that I was determined at all events to quit the vessel, and trust to the protection and guidance of a superintending Providence for the rest.

“ As prodigality of life is, in some cases, the excess of virtue and courage—so there are others in which it is vice, meanness and cowardice. True courage is, according to the circumstances under which it is to operate, as rigidly tenacious and vigilant of life in one case, as it is indifferent and regardless in another; and I think it is a very strange contradiction in the human heart (although it often happens), that a man who has the most unbounded courage, seeking death even in the cannon's mouth, shall yet want the necessary resolution to make exertions to save his life in cases of ordinary

danger. The unfortunate-English purser could not collect courage sufficient to make an effort to save himself, and yet I think it probable that he would have faced a battery of artillery, or exposed himself to a pistol shot, if occasion required, as soon as any other man. Thus it appears at first view: but may not this seeming incongruity be explained by saying, that personal courage and fortitude are different qualities of the mind and body, and depend upon the exercise of entirely different functions?

“Be that as it may, I argued with myself, in the height of my calamitous situation, upon the subject of fortitude and dejection, courage and cowardice; and, notwithstanding the serious aspect of affairs, found myself listening to the suggestions of pride: what a paltry thing to yield, while strength is left to struggle! Vanity herself had her hint, and whispered, “Should I escape by an effort of my own, what a glorious theme of exultation!” There were I confess, transitory images in my mind, which co-operating with the natural attachment to self preservation, made me persevere, and resolve to do so while one vestige of hope was left for the mind to dwell on.

“Observing as I said before, the people consulting together, and resolving to join them, I made an effort to get to the lee shrouds, where they were standing, or rather clinging; but before I could accomplish it, I lost my hold, fell down the hatchway (the gratings having been carried away with the long boat), and was for some minutes entangled there among a heap of packages, which the violent fluctuations of the water had collected on the lee side. As the vessel moved with the sea, and the water flowed in, the packages and I were rolled together—sometimes one, sometimes another upon my person; so that I began to be apprehensive

could not be able to extricate myself: by the merest accident, however, I grasped something that lay in my way, made a vigorous spring, and gained the shrouds. Mr. Hall who followed me, in seizing the shrouds, was driven against me with such violence, that I could scarcely retain my hold of the rigging.

“Compelled by the perilous situation in which I stood, I called out to him for God’s sake to keep off, for that I was rendered quite breathless and worn out: he generously endeavoured to make way for me, and, in so doing, unfortunately lost his hold, and went down under the ship’s side. Never, never shall I forget my sensations, at this melancholy incident—I would have given millions of worlds that could have recalled the words which made him move; my mind was wound up to the last pitch of anguish: I may truly say, that this was the most bitter of all the bitter moments of my life, compared with which the other circumstances of the shipwreck seemed lessened—for I had insensibly acquired an unusual esteem and warm attachment for him, and was doubtful whether, after being even the innocent occasion of his falling, I ought to take further pains to preserve my own life. All those sensations were passing with the rapidity of lightning through my thoughts, when, as much to my astonishment as to my joy, I saw him borne by a returning wave, and thrown among the very packages from which I had but just before, with such labour and difficulty, extricated myself. In the end he proved equally fortunate, but, after a much longer and harder struggle, and after sustaining much more injury.

“I once more changed my station, and made my way to the poop, where I found myself rather more sheltered—I earnestly wished Mr. Hall to be

with me, whatever might be my ultimate fate—and beckoned him to come near me; but he only answered by shaking his head, in a feeble, desponding manner—staring at the same time wildly about him: even his spirit was subdued; and despair, perceived, had begun to take possession of his mind.

“Being a little more at ease in my new station than I had been before, I had more time to deliberate, and more power to judge. I recollected, that according to the course of time, the day was fast gone and the night quickly approaching; I reflected, that for any enterprize whatever day was much preferable to night; and above all I considered, that the vessel could not hold long together—therefore thought, that the best mode I could adopt would be, to take to the water with the first buoyant thing I could see; and, as the wind and water both seemed to run to the shore, to take my chance in that way of reaching it. In pursuance of this resolution, tore off my shirt, having before that thrown off the other parts of my dress—I looked at my sleeve buttons, in which was set the hair of my departed children—and, by an involuntary act of the imagination, asked myself the question, “Shall I be happy enough to meet them where I am now about to go?—Shall those dear last remains, too, become a prey to the devouring deep?”—In that instant, reason, suspended by the horrors of the scene, gave way to instinct. and I rolled my shirt up, and very carefully thrust it into a hole between decks, with the wild hopes that the sleeve-buttons might yet escape untouched. Watching my opportunity, I saw a log of wood floating near the vessel, and, waving my hand to Mr. Hall as a last adieu, jumped after it. Here, again, I was doomed to aggravated hardships—I had scarcely touched the log when a great sea snatched it from my hold: still—

came near me, I grasped at it ineffectually, till at last it was completely carried away, but not before it had cut and battered and bruised me in several places, and in a manner that at any other time I could have thought dreadful.

“ Death seemed inevitable; and all that occurred to me now to do, was to accelerate it, and get rid of its pangs as speedily as possible; for, though I knew how to swim; the tremendous surf rendered swimming useless, and all hope from it would have been ridiculous. I therefore began to swallow as much water as possible; yet, still rising by the buoyant principle of the waves to the surface, my former thoughts began to recur; and whether it was that, or natural instinct, which survived the temporary impressions of despair, I know not; but I endeavoured to swim, which I had not done long, when I again discovered the log of wood I had lost floating near me, and with some difficulty caught it. Hardly had it been an instant in my hands, when, by the same unlucky means I lost it again. I had often heard it said in Scotland, that if a man will throw himself flat on his back in the water, quite straight and stiff, and suffer himself to sink till the water gets into his ears, he will continue to float so for ever: this occurred to me now, and I determined to try the experiment; so I threw myself on my back in the manner I have described, and left myself to the disposal of Providence; nor was it long before I found the truth of the saying—for I floated with hardly an effort, and began for the first time to conceive something like hopes of preservation.

“ After lying in this manner, committed to the discretion of the tides, I soon saw the vessel—saw that it was at a considerable distance behind me. My liveliest hope began to play about my heart, and my fluttered with a thousand gay fancies in my mind: I began to form the favourable conclusion,

that the tide was carrying me rapidly to land from the vessel, and that I should soon once more touch *terra firma*.

i “ This expectation was a cordial that revived my exhausted spirits: I took courage, and left myself still to the same all-directing Power that had hitherto preserved me, scarcely doubting that I should soon reach the land. Nor was I mistaken; for, in a short time more, without effort or exertion, and without once turning from off my back, I found myself strike against the sandy beach. Overjoyed to the highest pitch of transport at my providential deliverance, I made a convulsive spring, and ran up a little distance on the shore; but was so weak and worn down by fatigue, and so unable to clear my stomach of the salt water with which it was loaded, that I suddenly grew deadly sick, and apprehended that I had only exchanged one death for another; and in a minute or two fainted away.”

Campbell's overland Journey to India, Page 159—176.

Narrative of the Loss of the Halleswell East Indiaman, on the coast of Dorsetshire, January 1786.

THE Halleswell East-Indiaman, of 758 tons burthen, then, commanded by Richard Pierce Esq; sailed through the Downs on Sunday the 1st of January, 1786, and the next morning being a breath of Dunnoze, it fell calm.

Monday the 2d of January. at three in the afternoon, a breeze sprung up from the South, when they ran in shore to land the pilot, but very thick weather coming on in the evening, and the wind baffling, at nine in the evening they were obliged to anchor in eighteen fathom water, furlled their top-sails, but could not furl their courses, the snow falling thick, and freezing as it fell.

Tuesday the 3d, at four in the morning, a strong gale came on from East-Nore-East, and the ship driving, they were obliged to cut their cables, and run off to sea. At noon, they spoke with a brig bound to Dublin, and having put their pilot on board her, bore down Channel immediately. At eight in the evening, the wind freshening and coming to the Southward, they reefed such sails as were judged necessary. At ten at night it blew a violent gale of wind at South, and they were obliged to carry a press of sail to keep the ship off shore, in doing which the hawse plugs, which according to a new improvement were put inside, were washed in, and the hawse bags washed away, in consequence of which they shipped a large quantity of water on the gun deck.

On sounding the well, and finding the ship had sprung a leak, and had five feet water in her hold, they clued the main top sail up, hauled up the main-sail, and immediately endeavoured to furl both, but could not effect it—All the pumps were set to work on discovering the leak.

Wednesday the 4th, at two in the morning, they endeavoured to wear the ship, but without success, and judging it necessary to cut away the mizen-mast it was immediately done, and a second attempt made to wear the ship, which succeeded no better than the former; and the ship having now seven feet water in her hold, and gaining fast on the pumps, it was thought expedient, for the preservation of the ship, to cut away the mainmast, the ship appearing to be in immediate danger of foundering.

At ten in the morning the wind abated considerably, and the ship labouring extremely, rolled the fore top-mast over on the larboard side, in the fall, the wreck went through the fore-sail, and tore it to

pieces. At eleven in the forenoon, the wind came to the West-ward, and the weather clearing up, the Berry-head was distinguishable bearing North and by East, distant four or five leagues; they now immediately bore another fore-sail, erected a jury main-mast, and set a top-gallant sail for a main-sail, under which sail they bore up for Portsmouth and employed the remainder of the day in getting up a jury mizen-mast.

About two in the morning on Friday the 6th the ship still driving, and approaching very fast to the shore, Mr. Henry Meriton, went into the cuddy, where the Captain then was, and a conversation took place, Captain Pierce expressing extreme anxiety for the preservation of his beloved daughters, and earnestly asking the officer if he could devise any means of saving them, and on his answering with great concern that he feared it would be impossible, but that their only chance would be to wait for the morning, the Captain lifted up his hands in silent and distressful ejaculation.

At this dreadful moment the ship struck with such violence as to dash the heads of those who were standing in the cuddy, against the deck above them, and the fatal blow was accompanied by a shriek of horror, which burst at one instant from every quarter of the ship.

Mr. Meriton, the officer, whom we have already mentioned, at this crisis of horror, offered to the desponding crew, the best advice which could possibly be given to them; he recommended their coming all to that side of the ship which lay lowest on the rocks, and singly to take the opportunities which might then offer of escaping to the shore. And having thus provided to the utmost of his power, for their safety, he returned to the round-house where by this time all the passengers, and most of

the officers were assembled, the latter employed in
 offering consolation to the unfortunate ladies, and
 with unparalleled magnanimity, suffering their com-
 mission for the fair and amiable companions of their
 misfortunes, to get the better of the sense of their
 own danger, and the dread of almost inevitable an-
 nihilation. at this moment, what must be the feel-
 ings of a Father—of such a Father as Captain
 Percel!

The ship struck on the rocks at or near Seacombe,
 on the island of Purbeck, between Peverel-Point,
 and St. Alban's-head, at a part of the shore where
 the cliff is of a vast height, and rises almost perpen-
 dicular from its base.

But at this particular spot the cliff is excavated at
 the foot, and presents a cavern of ten or twelve
 yards in depth, and of breadth equal to the length
 of a large ship, the sides of the cavern so nearly up-
 right as to be extremely difficult of access, the roof
 formed of the stupendous cliff, and the bottom of it
 strewed with sharp and uneven rocks, which seem
 to have been rent from above by some convulsion
 of Nature.

It was at the mouth of this cavern that the un-
 fortunate wreck lay stretched almost from side to
 side of it, and offering her broadside to the horrid
 assault.

But at the time the ship struck it was too dark to
 discover the extent of their danger, and the ex-
 treme horror of their situation; even Mr. Meriton
 himself conceived a hope that she might keep toge-
 ther till day light, and endeavoured to cheer his
 drooping friends, and in particular the unhappy la-
 dies, with this comfortable expectation, as an an-
 swer to the Captain's enquiries, how they went on,
 what he thought of their situation.

In addition to the company already in the round-

house, they had admitted three black women, and two soldiers wives, who with the husband of one of them had been permitted to come in, though the seamen who had tumultuously demanded entrance to get the lights, had been opposed, and kept out by Mr. Rogers, the third Mate, and Mr. Brumer the fifth, so that the numbers there were now increased to near fifty; Captain Pierce sitting on a chair, or some other moveable, with a daughter on each side of him, each of whom he alternately pressed to his affectionate bosom; the rest of the melancholy assembly were seated on the deck, which was strewn with musical instruments, and the wreck of furniture trunks, boxes and packages.

And here also Mr. Meriton, having previously cut several wax candles into pieces, and stuck them up in various parts of the round-house, and lighted up all the glass lanthorns he could find, took his seat, intending to wait the happy dawn, that might present to him the means of effecting his own escape, and afford him an opportunity of giving assistance to the partners of his danger; but observing that the poor ladies appeared parched and exhausted, he fetched a basket of oranges from some part of the round-house, and prevailed on some of them to refresh themselves by sucking a little of the juice. At this time they were all tolerably composed, except Miss Mansel, who was in hysterical fits on the floor deck of the round-house.

But on his return to the company, he perceived a considerable alteration in the appearance of the ship, the sides were visibly giving way, the deck seemed to be lifting, and he discovered other strong symptoms that she could not hold together much longer, he therefore attempted to go forward to look out, but immediately saw that the ship was separated in the middle, and that the fore part had

changed its position, and lay rather farther out towards the sea; and in this emergency, when the next moment might be charged with his fate, he determined to seize the present, and follow the example of the crew, and the soldiers, who were now quitting the ship in numbers, and making their way to a shore, of which they knew not yet the horrors.

Mr. Meriton discovered a spar, which appeared to be laid from the ship's side to the rocks, and on this spar he determined to attempt his escape.

He accordingly laid him down on it, and thrust himself forward, but he soon found the spar had no communication with the rock, he reached the end of it, and then slipped off, receiving a very violent bruise in his fall, and before he could recover his legs, he was washed off by the surge, in which he supported himself by swimming, till the returning wave dashed him against the back part of the cavern, where he laid hold of a small projecting piece of the rock, but was so benumbed, that he was on the point of quitting it, when a seaman who had already gained a footing, extended his hand, and assisted him till he could secure himself on a little shelf of the rock, from which he clambered still higher, till he was out of the reach of the surf.

Mr. Rogers the third mate, remained with the Captain, and the unfortunate ladies, and their companions, near 20 minutes after Mr. Meriton had quitted the ship.

At this time the sea was breaking in at the fore part of the ship, and reached as far as the main-mast, and Captain Pierce gave Mr Rogers a nod, and they took a lamp, and went together into the stern gallery, and after viewing the rocks for some time, Captain Pierce asked Mr. Rogers, if he thought there was any possibility of saving the girls,

to which he replied, he feared there was not, for they could only discover the black face of the perpendicular rock, and not the cavern which afforded shelter to those who escaped; they then returned to the round-house, and Mr. Rogers hung up the lamp, and Captain Pierce, with his great coat on, sat down between his two daughters, and struggled to suppress the parental tear which then burst into his eye.

The sea continuing to break in very fast, Mr. M'Manus, a midshipman, and Mr. Schutz, a passenger, asked Mr. Rogers what they could do to escape who replied, "follow me." and they then all went into the stern gallery, and from thence by the weather upper quarter gallery upon the poop, and whilst they were there a very heavy sea fell on board, and the round-house gave way, and he heard the ladies shriek at intervals, as if the water had reached them; the noise of the sea at other times drowning their voices.

Mr. Brimer had followed Mr. Rogers to the poop, where they had remained together about five minutes, when on the coming on of the last mentioned sea, they jointly seized a hen-cup, and the same wave which he apprehended proved fatal to some of those who remained below, happily carried him and his companion to the rock, on which they were dashed with such violence as to be miserably bruised and hurt.

Mr. Rogers and Mr. Brimer both however reached the cavern, and scrambled up the rock; on narrow shelves of which they fixed themselves, Mr. Rogers got so near to his friend Mr. Meriton as to exchange congratulations with him, but he was prevented from joining him by at least 20 men who were between them, neither of whom could move without immediate peril of his life.

They now found that a very considerable number of the crew, seamen, soldiers, and some petty officers were in the same situation with themselves, though many who had reached the rocks below, had perished, in attempting to ascend; what that situation was they were still to learn; at present they had escaped immediate death, but they were yet to encounter cold, nakedness, wind, rain, and the perpetual beating of the spray of the sea, for a difficult, precarious, and doubtful chance of escape.

In a very few minutes after Mr. Rogers had gained the rock, an universal shriek, which still vibrates in their ears, and, in which, the voice of female distress was lamentably distinguishable, announced the dreadful catastrophe; in a few moments all was rushed, except the warring winds, and beating waves; the wreck was buried in the remorseless deep, and not an atom of her was ever after discoverable.

Thus perished the Halfswell.

What an aggravation of woe was this dreadful, this tremendous blow, to the yet trembling, and scarcely half saved wretches, who were hanging about the sides of the horrid cavern.

After the bitterest three hours which misery ever lengthened into ages, the day broke on them; they now found that had the country been alarmed by the guns of distress which they had continued to fire for many hours before the ship struck, but which from the violence of the storm were unheard, they could neither be observed by the people from above, as they were completely ingulphed in the cavern, and over-hung by the cliff, nor did any part of the wreck remain to point out their probable place of refuge; below, no boat could live to search them out, and had it been possible to have acquainted those who would wish to assist them, with their exact situation, no ropes could be conveyed into the cavern; to facilitate their escape.

The only prospect which offered, was to creep along the side of the cavern, to its outward extremity, and on a ledge scarcely as broad as a man's hand, to turn the corner, and endeavour to climb up the almost perpendicular precipice, whose summit was near two hundred feet from the base.

And in this desperate effort did some succeed, whilst others, trembling with terror, and their strength exhausted by mental and bodily fatigue, lost their precarious footing, and perished in the attempt.

The first men who gained the summit of the cliff, were the Cook, and James Thompson, a Quartermaster, by their own exertions they made their way to the land, and the moment they reached it, hastened to the nearest house, and made known the situation of their fellow sufferers.

The house at which they first arrived was Eastington the present habitation of Mr. Garland, Steward or agent to the proprietors of the Purbeck Quarries, who immediately got together the workmen under his direction, and with the most zealous and animated humanity, exerted every effort for the preservation of the surviving crew of this unfortunate ship; ropes were procured with all possible dispatch, and every precaution taken that assistance should be speedily and effectually given.

As the day advanced, more assistance was obtained; and as the life preserving efforts of the survivors would admit, they crawled to the extremities of the cavern, and presented themselves to their preservers above, who stood prepared with the means which the situation would permit them to exercise, to help them to the summit.

*Circumstantial Narrative of the loss of the Hulsewell, &c.
Compiled from the communications of the
chief Officers, who escaped, Page 12—42*

